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President Asad's Remarks at State Dinner, June 15, 1974

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1. Following is complete text President Asad's remarks at State Dinner given in honor of President and Mrs. Nixon in Damascus June 15, 1974.
2. "Mr. President, Mrs. Nixon, Honored Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am indeed happy to extend a warm welcome to President Richard Nixon and to Mrs. Nixon; also to our honored American guests, wishing them all a happy stay in our country.
3. "Mr. President, as we extend greetings to the American people through you, we also express appreciation for your visit which has a historic significance, considering that you are the first President of the United States to pay a visit to our country. Your visit is especially meaningful in that it is taking place in an important

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[Juncture in the modern history of our region and after a long period of estrangement between our two countries. It is also meaningful in that it constitutes a part of the tour which you have declared to be dedicated to efforts aimed at establishing <sup>a just</sup> ~~just~~ and durable peace in our region.

4. "We welcome every sincere endeavor aimed at achieving a just peace and we wish you full success in your efforts. I should also make it clear that peace is a genuine attribute of the Arab Nation and that we have a real interest in such a peace. We desire a stability based on real freedom, in order to ensure for ourselves a many-sided progress, that would ultimately restore to our people the ability to play an appropriate role in the activities of the international community wherewith to serve both themselves and humanity at large.

5. "For a long period of time the Arab Nation has struggled to achieve peace. However, it has faced difficulties, and obstacles have been placed in its way. Moreover, it has been subjected to pressures and threats that have aimed at depriving it both of freedom and of the exercise of its free will, as well as at making it abandon the principles with regards to which it refuses all compromise.

6. "Our Nation whose land was the cradle of the most ancient civilizations and the birthplace of monotheistic religions and which, through its long history, made rich

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Contributions to culture is a productive Nation that harbours no harm to anyone. It has no other aim than living freely on its land and reconstructing its life in all fields, so as to be able to resume contributing to humanity under peaceful conditions. It cannot do this, however, while it feels that its fate and land are threatened and its freedom violated through the occupation of parts of its territory and while millions of our Nation, from Palestine and other Arab lands are dispersed.

7. "For 26 years now, the people of Palestine have lived homeless and completely deprived of their legitimate rights, which have been recognized by international law and conventions as well as confirmed--almost every year since 1947--by resolutions of the United Nations. This made them despair of the justice of man and international organizations because, the more they complained against injustice, the more aggressions were heaped upon them, and the more their rights were ignored by the aggressors, who have gone so far as to deny these rights and even to deny the very existence of the Palestinian people. By doing this, they have forced the Palestinian people to follow a path, not of their own choice, in order to remind the world of their existence and of their case. No peace can be established in this region unless a real and just solution is found for the Palestine question.

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8. "Mr. President, You can imagine the extent of the disappointment of the ~~Arab~~ Arab People during past years when they saw that the efforts they had exerted and the sacrifices they had made to achieve peace and justice were being spurned and rejected. They were likewise disheartened by the failure of efforts aimed at redressing their grievances.

9. "The only lasting and durable peace in this region would be a peace that would terminate Israeli occupation, restore the land to its people, remove the grievances inflicted upon the people of Palestine and ensure them of their legitimate national ~~rights~~ rights.

10. "During the last few years, efforts were made to impose a fait accompli, that has all the elements of renewed war and bloodshed and is far removed from the pathway to peace. We had to resist those efforts as we did, first in the October War, then in the Golan War, when it was ~~proved~~ <sup>proved</sup> that a fait accompli based on occupation and aggression cannot last.

11. "It was also proved that reliance on force to extract from others what is their legal rights constitutes disregard to human values on one hand and a lack of vision on the other hand. Furthermore, a fact, repeatedly re-affirmed throughout different historical events has been re-asserted namely the fact that any triumph which is not based on right and justice, if triumph it is, is only a temporary and feeble ~~triumph~~

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triumph which is bound sooner or later to collapse once the strong wind of good right and justice start blowing.

12. "Real peace is an urgent demand and a pressing need for all peoples of the world. Such peace should be based on ensuring the rights of peoples and removing their grievances.

13. "Indeed, world peace in the present age has become the ideal of humanity--an ideal which governments seek and for which peoples struggle. But this peace is almost impossible to achieve without establishing a just peace in this region which is one of the pivotal points of the world.

14. "Mr. President, We hope that your visit to the Syrian Arab Republic will mark the beginning of a new phase of relations between our two countries, a phase based on mutual respect unselfish cooperation and adherence to provisions of the U.N. Charter. We are confident that the existence of such relationship serves the interests of our peoples.

15. "We believe that the key to understanding and the essence of sound relations between any two states lies in a ~~frank~~ frank and clear ~~approach~~ approach. Hence our eagerness that our talks should be frank and clear in the hope that, through this, we can arrive at a common conceptions regarding subjects of discussion and a common understanding of the

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elements constituting a just peace in our region. There is no doubt that this would help us to take firm steps leading to a peace that fulfills the interests of the Arab People and all other peoples of the world.

16. "We fully appreciate your personal role and American political initiatives as well as the importance of these initiatives and their effect on international detente. We appreciate your desire for good and friendly relations in our region and your endeavor to establish a durable and firm peace in it. We have witnessed a manifestation of this new attitude in the mission you entrusted to your Secretary of State Dr. Henry Kissinger to contribute to the realization of a first step along the road of a ~~great~~ permanent and lasting peace. We appreciate the ~~great~~ efforts he exerted during the talks for the disengagement of forces on the Syrian front.

17. "It is very important that we should regard what has been achieved as a prelude to the next stage which should establish peace on a firm and real foundation. This is the great challenge to meeting which, the efforts of all sincere supporters of peace should be directed.

18. "Mr. President, you will be soon celebrating the bi-centennial of independence. Let us not forget the lofty principles for which you fought the American War of Independence, above all the ~~x~~ principle of liberty.

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19. "I am happy to refer to the fact that a large number of U.S. citizens are of Syrian descent and have proved themselves to be good citizens in all fields of life. This should serve as an urge to enhance friendship between our two peoples.

20. "Let us open a new page and begin a new phase in the relations between our two countries in which freedom and justice are emphasized, the causes of aggression are removed and actions are performed with the support and backing of our two peoples, in order to serve the good of the whole humanity.

21. "In conclusion, Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish to stress the importance of this visit and to extend greetings to President Richard Nixon and Mrs. Nixon and to wish them good health and happiness. Let us also extend greetings to the American ~~xxx~~ people for whom we wish continued success and progress."

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